

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Please replace Figures 1 and 2 with the enclosed replacements sheets. Figure 1 has been amended to show the decorative part (1,2) and reinforcer (3) separately (Fig. 1a) and together after welding (Fig. 1b). Figure 2 has been amended to designate the ribs (8) of the reinforcer (3) and to show the different layers that make of a preferred embodiment the decorative part, i.e., the support (1), the heat-cured layer (10), the intermediate layer (9) and the decorative layer (2). No new matter has been added.

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-13 and 15-21 are pending. Support for the amendments to the specification and drawings can be found at page 1, line 44, et seq.

Claims 12, 13 and 15-18 have been withdrawn from consideration as being directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention of claims 1, 3, 4, 6-11 and 19-21. Applicants note that claims 1, 3, 4, 6-11 and 19-21 are directed to a product and link claim 12 directed to a process for making said product and claims 13 and 15-18 directed to a process for using said product (see MPEP 809.03(D)). Should any linking claim be allowed, the restriction requirement must be withdrawn (MPEP 809). Accordingly, applicants request rejoinder of claims 12, 13 and 15-18 in accordance with MPEP 821.04. Applicants further note that claims directed to the process of making and/or using the patentable product may be presented by way of amendment and process claims which depend from or otherwise include all the limitations of the patentable product will be entered as a matter of right (MPEP 821.04). Thus, applicants urge that it is irrelevant that claims 13 and 15-18 were amended during prosecution. The issue is not whether restriction is proper between these claims and the claims as originally filed, but rather whether restriction is proper between these claims and the other pending claim.

For clarity, applicants have amended Figure 1 to show the decorative part and reinforcer separately, and as a unit after being welded together. Applicants have also amended the Figure 2 to show the different layers that make up the cover plate/decorative layer as requested by the Examiner. A household device such as a washing machine or a dishwasher would be situated in the direction on the page below the cover plates depicted in the drawings.

Claims 1, 6-11 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Melill et al. (US 3,533,153) or Gault (US 3,156,041). The Examiner has indicated that claims 2-4 and 19-20 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of previous claim 2, thereby effectively rewriting claim 2 in independent form as suggested. Accordingly, this rejection has been overcome.